

WaterLine

A publication about Ontario's water and wastewater industry.

A salute to volunteer firefighters

The other life-saving use for Ontario's water supply

The pages of *Waterline* are traditionally dedicated to news, issues and developments related to Ontario's water and wastewater industry.

In this issue, in honour of *Fire Prevention Week* we also wanted to recognize the brave men and women who rely on the municipal water supply to save lives – Ontario's firefighters and volunteer firefighters.

Volunteer firefighters –
A special breed

It's no secret that the job of a firefighter is a difficult one. Making a career out of risking one's life to protect others is a truly noble calling. Statistics show that, on average, fire kills eight people each week in Canada, with residential fires accounting

for 73% of these fatalities.

Imagine, then, the level of dedication and sacrifice of Ontario's volunteer firefighters. Many of these individuals devote themselves to saving lives for little or no compensation, in addition to holding down full-time jobs.

It might come as a surprise to learn that the majority of fire departments (450 out of 478) in Ontario utilize the services of volunteer fire service personnel. Recognized for their commitment and generosity and saving Ontario taxpayers more than an estimated \$1 billion annually, these professionals strive to provide skilled, competent and caring service. (See OCWA's Heroes on page 4.)

**Fire
Prevention
Week**

Photo courtesy of the Aylmer Express



OCWA's Emergency Response Teams

The last line of defence for Ontario's drinking water



emergency response teams across the province. These highly-trained, specially-equipped teams are ready to respond to a drinking water emergency in any Ontario municipality.

"OCWA has a proven Emergency Management Program to address emergencies in systems which we

continued on page 3 ...

In the wake of the Walkerton Inquiry and the introduction of the *Safe Drinking Water Act*, the Ontario Clean Water Agency (OCWA), in partnership with the Ministry of the Environment, established



**Ontario Clean Water Agency
Agence Ontarienne Des Eaux**

1-800-667-OCWA www.ocwa.com



A message from George Terry
Vice President Operations,
Northern Ontario and First Nations

**OCWA now has five
'emergency response teams'
prepared to respond to
water-related emergencies
in the province.**

Emergency Response – On and Off the Job

'Excitement' is not necessarily the first word one might associate with the water and wastewater industry. While operating and maintaining these facilities is demanding, when done properly, it should also be predictable and relatively uneventful.

As Canada learned in the summer of 2000 in the Town of Walkerton, however, water-related emergencies can happen. Thanks to recommendations from the Walkerton Inquiry, OCWA now has five 'emergency response teams' prepared to respond to water-related emergencies in the province. These teams can aptly be described as Ontario's last line of defence when it comes to the safety of our drinking water. This past spring, these teams came to the rescue in the Town of Foley, helping to resolve that community's longstanding boil water advisory.

In speaking with some members of our staff recently, I was also very pleased to

learn about another team of heroes within our organization. We had always been aware that a number of our employees served as volunteer firefighters in their respective communities. What we didn't know was precisely how many of our employees had chosen to sacrifice their time and risk their well-being to answer that call.

All told, OCWA has 34 employees serving as volunteer firefighters today. Many of these individuals have been serving in these positions for 10, 20, in some cases more than 30 years, following in the footsteps of their fathers before them. With the approach of *Fire Prevention Week*, we thought it was appropriate to recognize OCWA's everyday heroes who live and work in your communities.

You can read more about these volunteer firefighters and OCWA's emergency response teams throughout the pages of this issue.

Report Recommends Reducing Levels of Fluoride in Drinking Water

A Health Canada-commissioned report has recommended the government lower children's exposure to fluoride in toothpaste, infant formula and drinking water.

The report, which was originally submitted to the federal government in January of 2007 was just made public this summer.

Fluoride has been added to municipal water supplies for decades, thanks to its cavity-fighting properties. Research, however, has led to safety concerns over alleged links to osteosarcoma (a rare form of bone cancer in young boys) and fluorosis (the decay of children's teeth).

The report said the 'weight of evidence' did not support any link between exposure

to fluoride and an increased risk of these conditions. However, the expert panel expressed concerns that the "consumption of powdered infant formula reconstituted with fluoridated water could lead to excessive intake of fluoride in infants".

In Ontario, the decision about whether or not to add fluoride to a community's water supply is one that is made at the municipal level on a case-by-case basis, often with input from local residents by way of a public referendum or similar process.

Operating authorities such as OCWA will continue to monitor related research as part of their commitment to keeping Ontario municipalities up-to-date on this issue.

**Operating authorities
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related research...**

Emergency

continued from page 1 ...

operate," says Dr. Larry Moore, OCWA's Emergency Management Program Coordinator who also oversees the training and activities of the OCWA Emergency Response Teams (OERT). "When the Ministry wanted to create an emergency response capability for all of Ontario, OCWA's expertise was a natural fit. The Province's funding provides the teams with advanced resources and training."

The five teams are comprised of specialists from OCWA's operations across Ontario. Although members have regular duties as managers and operators, they are ready to deploy on a moment's notice anywhere the Ministry requires their assistance. Each team has a rapid-deployment trailer containing the equipment they need to tackle most emergencies. They also participate in extensive training and tests each year to keep their skills sharp and their procedures current.

Some OERT tests simulate emergency conditions, but others are more practical. This spring the teams performed an assessment and complete rehabilitation of Foley's water treatment plant, freeing the community from a 'boil water' advisory that had been in place for months.

"These training opportunities give OERT hands-on practice addressing challenging emergency situations," says Moore. "In the event of a crisis that expertise is available to any municipality in Ontario."

OCWA's clients benefit from the program as well, Moore explains. "OERT members may be the most highly trained water emergency professionals in the Province. They bring their OERT experience and extra training to the OCWA systems they operate, ensuring the highest standards of preparedness and efficiency."



Spotlight on Infrastructure Management

Engineering reviews play a key role in assessing system sustainability

When many of the province's water systems were originally built, planning for their repair or replacement didn't factor significantly into municipal budgets. Today, many of those same assets are still in use – often decades beyond their intended lifespans. Repair and replacement of those systems is becoming critical.

While some municipalities have

variety of engineering service available to help in such situations.

"Our engineers have worked with just about every different kind and size of water system in Ontario," explains John Thompson, P. Eng., OCWA's Director of Engineering Services. "We help the operator determine the status of each system component, its initial and current value



invested to expand their treatment facilities ("vertical assets"), many plants still depend on outdated equipment. And in all but a few cases, distribution and collection pipes ("horizontal assets") have not been upgraded at all. In fact, some of Ontario's water and wastewater pipelines are almost 100 years old.

Section 3150 of the Public Sector Accounting Board standards (www.psab-csp.ca) requires all municipalities in Canada to account for depreciation of tangible capital assets – including water systems – in their financial reports. To generate the necessary data, municipalities need to perform a comprehensive engineering review. Some municipalities are surprised to learn there is a unique

(for calculation of depreciation), and the priority items for repair or replacement."

This information allows the municipality to accurately project repair and replacement costs necessary to maintain a sustainable water system. Ontario's *Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act* will eventually require water systems to be self-sustaining, by building projected repair and replacement costs directly into the user rate.

"This process is about more than just compliance," Thompson says. "A review can point out ways to improve and upgrade infrastructure in place, potentially increasing efficiency while reducing energy costs, maintenance and other factors. For a municipality with limited funds, those opportunities can represent real savings."

OCWA's Heroes

Today, 34 OCWA staff members serve as volunteer firefighters across the province. What motivates them? For many, it's making a meaningful contribution to their communities. "It's great to be able to give back in whatever way I can," says



Patrick Robak, Process and Compliance Technician, Belle River Maidstone WPCP and Town of Lakeshore Fire Department volunteer firefighter. Patrick's efforts have been meaningful indeed. In 2000, he was the first responder to a medical call and performed CPR, saving the life of a six-month-old boy.

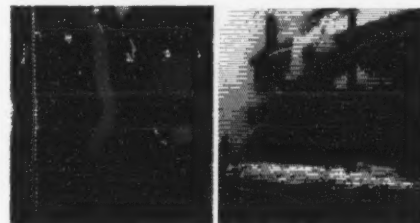
Many volunteer firefighters, like Alfred Hub Operator Charles Gagnon, share a keen interest in the professional training required to do their jobs well.



Since becoming an Alfred-Plantagenet Township Fire Department volunteer firefighter in 1999, he has completed courses in Ice and Cold Water Rescue, Defibrillation and Oxygen Therapy and Confined Spaces Rescue. In 2006, he became training coordinator for the township's three fire services.

Family tradition also attracts many volunteer firefighters. Essex West Hub Cluster Manager Tim Sunderland is following the footsteps of his father who served the Kingsville Fire Department for 28 years. Now, Tim is the volunteer captain. It's no wonder he says, "I'm proud to be involved with such a great group of committed people."

And OCWA is proud of staff members like Tim and his colleagues. We are grateful for their meaningful contributions to our communities and honoured to point the spotlight their way during Fire Prevention Week 2008.



OCWA Firefighting Volunteers

David Nussey, Essex East North,
District Fire Chief with Lakeshore
Tim Sunderland, Essex West,
Captain with Kingsville
Jerry Vanbruaene, Stratford,
Fire Chief with Grand Bend
Gene Ross, North Western Ontario
(NWO), Fire Chief with Schreiber
Kevin Chapeskie, Ottawa Valley,
Deputy Fire Chief
Richard Connell, Brant-Haldimand,
Lt. Training Officer with Hamilton
Patrick Robak, Essex East North
Jeff McHardy, Essex East South
Jack Quinn, Essex West
Mark Edgerton, Kawartha
Bill Barwise, Lambton West
Paul Shular, Grey Bruce Huron
Scott Craggs, Orangeville
Jeff Hardy, Orangeville
Robert Lessard, Alfred
Charles Gagnon, Alfred
Patrick Laurin, North Eastern
Ontario (NEO)

Anthony Danis, NEO
Frank McGonigal, NEO
Marc Desbiens, NEO
Chad Byce, NEO
Celina Rivers, North Western
Ontario (NWO)
Robert Desjardins, NWO
Filipe Jorge, NWO
Derek Chapman, Trent Valley
Jim Laur, Elgin Middlesex
Leslie Knott, Elgin Middlesex
Dan Rowlands, Espanola
Ryan McKie, Espanola
Paul MacDermott, Waterloo
Richard Bell, Brant-Haldimand
Brendon Bird, Brant-Haldimand



**Ontario Clean Water Agency
Agence Ontarienne Des Eaux**

One Yonge Street, Suite 1700
Toronto, Ontario M5E 1E5

1-800-667-OCWA www.ocwa.com